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## General

Cook Islands, a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand, consists of 15 islands located in the South Pacific Ocean between 8°S and 23°S, and 156°W and 167°W.

They are divided into two groups known as the Northern Cook and Lower Cook Islands.

The Northern Cook Islands consist of Palmerston, Suvarrow Atoll, Penrhyn, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Nassau, and Pukapuka Islands.

The Lower Cook Islands consist of Mangaia, Rarotonga, Mauke, Mitiaro, Atiu, Takutea, and the Hervey Islands.

The climate is tropical and moderated by trade winds.

The terrain is low coral atolls in the N. Volcanic and hilly islands are in the S.

All the islands of the N group, as well as Manuae and Takutea in the S, are coral atolls, generally enclosing a lagoon.

The remainder of the six islands of the S group are more elevated.

Rarotonga, the largest of the Cook Islands, has an area of 25 square miles. The rugged volcanic interior of the island rises to a height of 652m.

## Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

## Currency

The official unit of currency is the New Zealand dollar, consisting of 100 cents.

## Government

Cook Islands is a self-governing parliamentary government in free association with New Zealand. Cook Islands are fully responsible for their internal affairs. New Zealand retains responsibility for external affairs, in consultation with Cook Islands.

The Cook Islands are governed by a Legislative Assembly of 22 members. Executive authority is vested in Her Majesty the Queen.

Avarua, the administrative center of the chain, is situated on the N side of Rarotonga.

The capital is Rarotonga.

## Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

January 1, New Year's Day; March 5, Gospel Day; Good Friday; Easter Monday; April 25, Anzac Day; early June, Queen's Birthday; August 4, Constitution Day, October 26, Gospel Day; December 25, Christmas Day; and December 26, Boxing Day.

## Industries

The main industries are based on fruit processing and tourism.

The government is considered a major employer in the Cook Islands. Secondary industries operating in Rarotonga include a fruit cannery, two clothing factories, and production of local handicrafts.

The N atolls produce coconuts and fish. In the S atolls tropical produce concentration is on bananas, citrus, and pineapples.

**Languages**

The official language of the Cook Islands is English. Most islanders are bilingual, using the dialect, Cook Islands Maori.

**Time Zone**

The standard time for Cook Islands is UT (GMT) plus 10 hours 30 minutes.

**U.S. Embassy**

There are no U.S. diplomatic offices in the Cook Islands.